This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claim 1 (canceled)

Claim 2 (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 53 ~~1~~ wherein the pipette tip is formed of a collapsible material.

Claim 3 (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 53 ~~1~~ wherein the pipette tip is formed of a flexible and collapsible material.

Claim 4 (currently amended): An apparatus for preparing a fluid sample, the apparatus comprising:

a) a first part including

i) a pipette tip having an open tip end, and

ii) a sample cup, fluidly coupled with the pipette tip and having an open end; and

b) a second part including

i) a channel for receiving the pipette tip of the first part,

ii) a support for accommodating at least a portion of the sample cup of the first part, and

iii) a constricted passage, arranged between the channel and the support, for collapsing the pipette tip of the first part as the first part is inserted into the second part,

~~The apparatus of claim 1~~ wherein the pipette tip of the first part and the constricted passage of the second part are designed such that, as the pipette tip passes through

the constricted passage, walls defining the pipette tip collapse inwardly and form a liquid seal.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 53 ~~1~~ wherein a length of the channel of the second part is at least as long as a length of the pipette tip of the first part.

Claim 6 (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 53 ~~1~~ wherein the open end of the sample cup of the first part is dimensioned to mate with an automated pipetting system.

Claim 7 (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 53 ~~1~~ wherein the support of the second part is shaped to match a bottom of the sample cup of the first part.

Claim 8 (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 53 ~~1~~ wherein the support of the second part is shaped to guide the pipette tip of the first part to the constricted passage of the second part as the first part is inserted into the second part.

Claim 9 (currently amended): An apparatus for preparing a fluid sample, the apparatus comprising:

a) a first part including

i) a pipette tip having an open tip end, and

ii) a sample cup, fluidly coupled with the pipette tip and having an open end; and

b) a second part including

i) a channel for receiving the pipette tip of the first part,

ii) a support for accommodating at least a portion of the sample cup of the first part, and

iii) a constricted passage, arranged between the channel and the support, for collapsing the pipette tip of the first part as the first part is inserted into the second part,

~~The apparatus of claim 1~~ wherein the support of the second part is shaped as a funnel.

Claim 10 (currently amended): An apparatus for preparing a fluid sample, the apparatus comprising:

a) a first part including

i) a pipette tip having an open tip end, and

ii) a sample cup, fluidly coupled with the pipette tip and having an open end; and

b) a second part including

i) a channel for receiving the pipette tip of the first part,

ii) a support for accommodating at least a portion of the sample cup of the first part, and

iii) a constricted passage, arranged between the channel and the support, for collapsing the pipette tip of the first part as the first part is inserted into the second part,

~~The apparatus of claim 1~~ wherein the support of the second part is tapered.

Claims 11-52 (canceled)

Claim 53 (currently amended): An apparatus for preparing a fluid sample, the apparatus comprising:

a) a first part including

i) a pipette tip having an open tip end, and

ii) a sample cup, fluidly coupled with the pipette tip and having an open end; and

b) a second part including

i) a channel for receiving the pipette tip of the first part,

ii) a support for accommodating at least a portion of the sample cup of the first part, and

iii) a constricted passage, arranged between the channel and the support, for collapsing the pipette tip of the first part as the first part is inserted into the second part,

~~The apparatus of claim 1~~ wherein the pipette tip is tapered.

Claim 54 (currently amended): An apparatus for preparing a fluid sample, the apparatus comprising:

a) a first part including

i) a pipette tip having an open tip end, and

ii) a sample cup, fluidly coupled with the pipette tip and having an open end; and

b) a second part including

i) a channel for receiving the pipette tip of the first part,

ii) a support for accommodating at least a portion of the sample cup of the first part, and

iii) a constricted passage, arranged between the channel and the support, for collapsing the pipette tip of the first part as the first part is inserted into the second part,

~~The apparatus of claim 1~~ wherein the constricted passage has a fixed cross section.

Claim 55 (currently amended): An apparatus for preparing a fluid sample, the apparatus comprising:

a) a first part including

i) a pipette tip having an open tip end, and

ii) a sample cup, fluidly coupled with the pipette tip and having an open end; and

b) a second part including

i) a channel for receiving the pipette tip of the first part,

ii) a support for accommodating at least a portion of the sample cup of the first part, and

iii) a constricted passage, arranged between the channel and the support, for collapsing the pipette tip of the first part as the first part is inserted into the second part,

~~The apparatus of claim 1~~ wherein the pipette tip of the first part and the constricted passage of the second part are designed such that, as the pipette tip passes through the constricted passage, walls defining the pipette tip collapse inwardly and form a liquid seal such that liquid in the pipette tip of the first part is forced upward into the sample cup of the first part.

Claim 56 (currently amended): An apparatus for preparing a fluid sample, the apparatus comprising:

a) a first part including

i) a pipette tip having an open tip end, and

ii) a sample cup, fluidly coupled with the pipette tip and having an open end; and

b) a second part including

i) a channel for receiving the pipette tip of the first part,

ii) a support for accommodating at least a portion of the sample cup of the first part, and

iii) a constricted passage, arranged between the channel and the support, for collapsing the pipette tip of the first part as the first part is inserted into the second part,

~~The apparatus of claim 1~~ wherein the pipette tip of the first part and the constricted passage of the second part are designed such that, as the pipette tip passes through the constricted passage, walls defining the pipette tip collapse inwardly and form a moving liquid seal such that the moving liquid seal progresses up the pipette tip as the pipette tip passes through the constricted passage.

Claim 57 (currently amended): An apparatus for preparing a fluid sample, the apparatus comprising:

a) a first part including

i) a pipette tip having an open tip end, and

ii) a sample cup, fluidly coupled with the pipette tip and having an open end; and

b) a second part including

i) a channel for receiving the pipette tip of the first part,

ii) a support for accommodating at least a portion of the sample cup of the first part, and

iii) a constricted passage, arranged between the channel and the support, for collapsing the pipette tip of the first part as the first part is inserted into the second part,

~~The apparatus of claim 1~~ wherein the pipette tip of the first part and the constricted passage of the second part are designed such that, as the pipette tip passes through the constricted passage, walls defining the pipette tip collapse inwardly and form a moving liquid seal such that the moving liquid seal progresses up the pipette tip as the pipette tip passes through the constricted passage, wherein the moving liquid seal forces liquid in the pipette tip upward into the sample cup.

Claim 58 (previously presented): The apparatus of claim 53 wherein the pipette tip of the first part and the constricted passage of the second part are designed such that, as the pipette tip passes through the constricted passage, walls defining the pipette tip collapse inwardly and form a liquid seal such that liquid in the pipette tip of the first part is forced upward into the sample cup of the first part.

Claim 59 (previously presented): The apparatus of claim 53 wherein the pipette tip of the first part and the constricted passage of the second part are designed such that, as the pipette tip passes through the constricted passage, walls defining the pipette tip collapse inwardly and form a moving liquid seal such that the moving liquid seal progresses up the pipette tip as the pipette tip passes through the constricted passage.

Claim 60 (previously presented): The apparatus of claim 53 wherein the pipette tip of the first part and the constricted passage of the second part are designed such that, as the pipette tip passes through the constricted

passage, walls defining the pipette tip collapse inwardly and form a moving liquid seal such that the moving liquid seal progresses up the pipette tip as the pipette tip passes through the constricted passage, wherein the moving liquid seal forces liquid in the pipette tip upward into the sample cup.

Claim 61 (previously presented): The apparatus of claim 54 wherein the pipette tip of the first part and the constricted passage of the second part are designed such that, as the pipette tip passes through the constricted passage, walls defining the pipette tip collapse inwardly and form a liquid seal such that liquid in the pipette tip of the first part is forced upward into the sample cup of the first part.

Claim 62 (previously presented): The apparatus of claim 54 wherein the pipette tip of the first part and the constricted passage of the second part are designed such that, as the pipette tip passes through the constricted passage, walls defining the pipette tip collapse inwardly and form a moving liquid seal such that the moving liquid seal progresses up the pipette tip as the pipette tip passes through the constricted passage.

Claim 63 (previously presented): The apparatus of claim 54 wherein the pipette tip of the first part and the constricted passage of the second part are designed such that, as the pipette tip passes through the constricted passage, walls defining the pipette tip collapse inwardly and form a moving liquid seal such that the moving liquid seal progresses up the pipette tip as the pipette tip

passes through the constricted passage, wherein the moving liquid seal forces liquid in the pipette tip upward into the sample cup.

Claim 64 (new): The apparatus of claim 54 wherein the pipette tip is formed of a collapsible material.

Claim 65 (new): The apparatus of claim 54 wherein the pipette tip is formed of a flexible and collapsible material.

Claim 66 (new): The apparatus of claim 54 wherein a length of the channel of the second part is at least as long as a length of the pipette tip of the first part.

Claim 67 (new): The apparatus of claim 54 wherein the open end of the sample cup of the first part is dimensioned to mate with an automated pipetting system.

Claim 68 (new): The apparatus of claim 54 wherein the support of the second part is shaped to match a bottom of the sample cup of the first part.

Claim 69 (new): The apparatus of claim 54 wherein the support of the second part is shaped to guide the pipette tip of the first part to the constricted passage of the second part as the first part is inserted into the second part.